GOVERNMENT OF INDIA
HEALTH AND FAMILY WELFARE
LOK SABHA

UNSTARRED QUESTION NO:2395
ANSWERED ON:06.08.2003
BAN ON THE USE OF CHEWING TOBACCO
RAMESH CHENNITHALA

Will the Minister of HEALTH AND FAMILY WELFARE be pleased to state:

(a) whether addiction to chewing tobacco popularly known as chuna can lead to blindness;

(b) whether several children with severe burns in the eyes caused due to this addition have been admitted to AIIMS recently; and

(c) if so, the steps taken/being taken by the Government to control these cases and create awareness among general public about this menace?

Answer

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF HEALTH AND FAMILY WELFARE (SHRI A. RAJA)

(a): India has a large population of oral Tobacco users. These people commonly use Chuna as an additive. Chuna consists of calcium hydroxide paste and is being sold in the form of plastic pouches. Children view these pouches as toys. When squeezed hard they tend to burst and the chuna gets sprayed around. Once it gets into the eyes, it damages the cornea. This can lead to corneal blindness.

(b): Recently, several children have been admitted in R.P.Centre with varying degrees of ocular burns caused by chuna. Most of these cases are severe in nature. A few adults have also been seen with similar ocular burns.

(c): The Govt. has been undertaking awareness programmes to discourage use of tobacco products through IEC activities. Recently a comprehensive legislation namely `The Cigarettes and other Tobacco Products (Prohibition of Advertisement and Regulation of Trade & Commerce, Production, supply & Distribution)Act 2003` has been enacted, which inter-alia discourages tobacco use through various control measures namely ban of sale to minors below 18 years and ban on sale of tobacco products within a radius of 100 yards of educational institutions.